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Remarks of Representative Lee Nerison  
on Assembly Bill 743  
Committee on Transportation  
February 21, 2008

Good morning, Chairman Petrowski and committee members. Thank you for having a public hearing today on Assembly Bill 743 which allows the Department of Transportation to contract with third-party testers, such as driving schools, to conduct road tests for "Class D" vehicle operators.

No doubt, many of you have heard stories from your constituents of long waiting periods and long trips to another town to obtain a driver's license. I have authored Assembly Bill 743 because the number of calls and complaints from people waiting for this service has increased since I first got elected.

The state of Wisconsin already allows third party testers to license school bus drivers, motorcycle drivers, and those seeking a commercial driver's license. This bill is not a mandate – it simply gives the Department of Transportation flexibility to contract with third party testers to provide this service to folks like you and me as the agency sees fit.

This issue really hits home for me. Some of you may know that the Department of Transportation removed the Department of Motor Vehicles service center from Viroqua in December 2006, leaving a big void for me and my fellow Vernon County residents. We're now forced to drive at least an hour each way to Onalaska, Richland Center, or Prairie du Chien for driver's license and vehicle registration services.

You may remember back to when I, and many of you, worked with the Joint Finance Committee to make sure that the statutory requirement to have a Division of Motor Vehicles service center in every county was not eliminated during the budget process. I would venture to guess that another attempt to eliminate this statute will be made in future budgets.

It is my hope that this bill will help to alleviate long wait-times and long distances to travel for my constituents, and yours, who deserve access to driver's license services close to home. Allowing people to use the services of a third-party tester would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Assembly Bill 743  
~Third-Party Driving Examinations ~

Dodge County Sheriff Todd Nehls  
Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Transportation  
February 21, 2008

Approximately one year ago, my son Taylor had successfully completed his required Drivers Education classroom and behind the wheel driving requirement with the local Driver Education School. As a parent, this is one of the most important times for me as I understand that soon my son will have a driver's license and as a parent, will assume responsibility for him as he operates the family sedan.

The next 30 days was very frustrating as I tried for days upon days to schedule my son for his road test through the Department of Transportation website. I accessed the DOT web site, which is the only way one can schedule the road test. For weeks I attempted to get an appointment, any appointment, within the confines of Dodge County and there was nothing available for the next couple of months. I then resorted to searching the entire state and finally found an opening in Bloomer which is three hours away. I was willing to go anywhere. I then logged on daily in an effort to find a location closer, searching every community within Dodge County as well as those in adjacent counties. There was nothing.

I shared my plight with other parents at athletic events and found their frustration was worse than mine—parents who took what was available even though it required driving one hour to a DOT station. My frustration peaked and I called a friend at the local DOT station and asked if this was normal and he commented that there were staffing issues and not the necessary staff to fulfill the necessary times needed to test all the local students. He agreed to call me when he would post open appointments. The next week he called and I logged on and was able to secure a slot, I was very fortunate.

In sharing this frustration with family in Texas, my brother explained how they do it. He stated it is the parent's obligation to ensure their child gets the necessary behind the wheel training. There is no Drivers Education requirement for third party driving. Once the parent feels their child is ready they sign the slip and off to DOT you go to be issued your license. On face value I had some reservations about this but then thought - who best to know when their son or daughter is ready to take on the responsibility of a driver's license than the parents who took them out driving?

I could not stop thinking about our current system. Getting one's driver's license is serious business and our current system only compounds the challenge. I support the current proposed legislation and permitting the recognized drivers education schools to sign off on their students by facilitating the road test themselves vs. the Department of Transportation employees. Who best knows the driving abilities of these students than the driver's school and the student's parents?

Again, I support the necessary legislation that will help streamline the drivers license process as well as place the responsibility for road testing to those who know the student best, the drivers education school. I speak not only as a parent of a teenage driver but as the Dodge County Sheriff.

Thank you.